



The Center for Strategic and International Studies

Georgetown University / 1800 K Street Northwest / Washington DC 20006 / Telephone 202 / 887-0200

Cable Address: CENSTRAT

TWX: 7108229583

THE SOVIET UNION IN THE 1980s: PROJECT SUMMARY

Background

The Georgetown Center for Strategic and International Studies is conducting a major examination of the significant trends and developments within the Soviet Union that will shape Soviet foreign policy over the next decade. The Soviet Union is facing critical choices in the political, economic, military, demographic, technological and social spheres, all of which will affect its behavior in the international arena. Of these many factors, seven broad areas stand out as particularly important.

Key Issues

1. The Political Succession

At the recent 26th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, no major changes were made in the Soviet leadership. This development suggests that when the succession occurs, it will be dramatic. What will be the effects on Soviet foreign policy? Will the so-called generational change in leaders make a dramatic impact?

2. Economic Developments: The Military, Industry, Agriculture and Energy

The basic problems of the Soviet economy are fairly well known: a decline in overall growth rates, in productivity, in investment, and in the working age population; a lagging agricultural sector; and a large share of resources dedicated to national defense. What are the policy alternatives for the Soviet Union? Can it have both guns and butter? If not, what are the implications of the Soviet choice? What will and/or should be the role of external economic relations? Can or will the Soviet Union continue to pursue an economic strategy that gives a high priority to external credits, trade, technology? How will the Soviet Union's agricultural performance affect its foreign policy behavior and goals?

Although there are differing assessments about the severity of the Soviet Union's energy problem, energy policy is also a clear priority in Moscow. How dependent on imported oil is the Soviet

Union likely to become? What will be the impact of developments in the energy sphere on Soviet policy?

3. Demographic Trends and Social Tensions

The balance of the Soviet population is so changing that ethnic Russians will soon be a minority. Nevertheless, they remain in the majority of the key decision making roles in the Soviet hierarchy. How will the Soviet Union adapt to its changing demographic character? To what extent will the non-Russian and non-European elements of the Soviet population play a greater role in Soviet policy-making? What are the prospects for minority unrest in the Soviet Union? What will be the likely impact on Soviet economic and military structures, and what tradeoffs between them are probable, in light of the much smaller age groups which will be joining the labor pool? How will Soviet leaders meet rising consumer demands and dissatisfaction?

4. Developments in Eastern Europe

Unlike earlier crises in Eastern Europe, the current crisis in Poland does not stem from a disloyal or "misguided" Communist leadership, but a weak leadership confronting social unrest. To what extent does this crisis reflect a more general systemic crisis that could be repeated elsewhere in Eastern Europe? To what extent is it a harbinger of development in the Soviet Union itself?

5. The Military

Unlike the political leadership, the military has largely experienced its succession already, although little is known about these new leaders. What are their goals, tactics and strategies? How do they view relations with the West? What level of technological skill does their weaponry indicate, and how does such weaponry compare with its Western counterparts in numbers and quality?

6. Intellectual and Cultural Life

Soviet society is undergoing considerable changes that bear on future policy problems. How will the growth of modern communications technology necessary for development affect the Soviet leadership's imperative of a closed society? What are the effects of external contacts, with both the West and the Third World? Will the status of Marxism-Leninism change? What is the state of art, religion, and intellectual life in the Soviet Union today?

7. External dynamics

Just as in the United States, the distinction between domestic politics and foreign policy in the Soviet Union is increasingly difficult to draw. External factors will interact with the above mentioned internal elements to shape Soviet policy creating dilemmas for the Soviet leadership. Among the external sources influencing Soviet policy are perceptions (and facts) of the future balance of power, especially with the United States, questions of political and military opportunity, relations with the People's Republic of China, developments in Western Europe and the evolution of NATO,

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military developments, technological change, and arms control considerations. How are these external factors likely to influence Soviet policy in light of domestic developments?

Methodology

This 18-month program will be built around in-house and commissioned research from the top experts in the Soviet field, seminars and briefings for the executive and legislative branches of government, a major international conference, and a series of publications designed to reach the widest possible audience.

In addition to the Project Director, Dr. Robert Byrnes, and a Steering Committee of CSIS experts and advisors, the Center has commissioned a number of authorities in the Soviet field to cover the various facets of the project. Each broad area outlined above will be covered in depth by a working group of three or four scholars under the leadership of a group chairman. The chairmen, all of whom represent the most substantive and up-to-date scholarship in their respective specializations, are responsible for delineating the boundaries of their research, choosing their group members, and writing a definitive monograph based on their findings. Group members will stimulate discussion and write commentaries and critiques of the chairmen's papers.

Communications

CSIS will communicate the findings of its study to the widest possible audience, not only in government but in the business and academic communities as well. The Center will use a variety of publication vehicles, including articles in the Washington Quarterly, pieces in the nation's leading newspapers and a special series of monographs produced by the chairmen and the working groups. The culmination of the project will be a major volume drawing chapters from each working group into a cohesive entity under the editorship of the Project Director.

In addition, the Center will sponsor Congressional meetings, CSIS roundtable discussions in various cities, special corporate briefings, and a variety of other forums for participants to share their findings.



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**FACTORS AFFECTING SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY
IN THE 1980s**

DIRECTION AND ADMINISTRATION

Dr. Robert Byrnes, DIRECTOR
Department of History
Ballantine Hall
Indiana University
Bloomington, Indiana 47405
(812) 335-5484

Aileen Masterson, COORDINATOR
CSIS
1800 K Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
(202) 775-3257
(202) 887-0200

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Cable Address: CENSTRAT

TWX: 7108229583

THE ECONOMY

Robert Campbell, CHAIRMAN
Indiana University
Department of Economics
Bloomington, IN 47401
(812) 335-7808

Morris Bornstein
University of Michigan
Department of Economics
Ann Arbor, MI 48109
(313) 763-4153

John Hardt
Congressional Research Service
Library of Congress
LM 203 JMMB
Washington, D.C. 20540
(202) 287-8888

Gale Johnson
University of Chicago
Department of Economics
1126 East 59th Street
University of Chicago
Chicago, IL 60637
(312) 753-4532

Thomas Wolf
Ohio State University
Department of Economics
Columbus, OH 43210
(614) 422-6701

STAT



The Center for Strategic and International Studies

Georgetown University / 1800 K Street Northwest / Washington DC 20006 / Telephone 202 / 887-0200

Cable Address: CENSTRAT

TWX: 7108229583

THE SYSTEM

Seweryn Bialer, CHAIRMAN
Research Institute on
International Change
Columbia University
420 W. 118th St.
New York, NY 10017
(212) 280-4639

George Breslauer
University of California-Berkeley
Dept. of Political Science
210 Barrows Hall
Berkeley, CA 94720
(415) 642-4655

Thane Gustafson
Rand Corporation
1700 Main Street
Santa Monica, CA 90406
(213) 393-0411

Myron Rush
Cornell University
Dept. of Government
Ithaca, NY 14850

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TWX: 7108229583

MILITARY FORCES

Coit Blacker, CHAIRMAN
CSIS
1800 K Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
(202) 887-0200

Fritz Ermarth
Northrop Corporation
1015 18th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
(202) 861-0861

Arnold Horelick
Rand Corporation
1700 Main Street
Santa Monica, CA 90406
(213) 393-0411

David Holloway
Cornell University
Peace Studies
Ithaca, NY 14850
(607) 256-6484

Lt. General Brent Scowcroft (Ret.)
International Six, Inc.
Suite 440
International Square
1875 I Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
(202) 861-0006

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Cable Address: CENSTRAT

TWX: 7108229583

DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL FACTORS

Gail Lapidus, CHAIRMAN
University of California-Berkeley
Center for Slavic and East
European Studies
Berkeley, CA 94702
(415) 642-3290

Walter Connor
Foreign Service Institute
Director, Soviet Studies
1400 Key Blvd.
Arlington, VA 22209
(703) 235-8841

Murray Feshbach
Georgetown University
Department of Demographics
37th & O Streets, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20057
(202) 625-4333

Gregory Massell
City University of New York
Hunter College, CUNY
659 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10027
(212) 570-5570

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The Center for Strategic and International Studies

Georgetown University / 1800 K Street Northwest / Washington DC 20006 / Telephone 202 / 887-0200

Cable Address: CENSTRAT

TWX: 7108229583

INTELLECTUAL AND CULTURAL FACTORS

STAT

Maurice Friedberg, CHAIRMAN
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Dept. of Slavic Language
and Literature
707 S. Matthews, Room 3092
Urbana-Champaign
Urbana, IL 61801
(217) 333-0681

John B. Dunlop
Oberlin College
Dept. of German and Russian
Oberlin, OH 44074
(216) 775-8651

Leo Labedz
SURVEY
Ilford House
133-135 Oxford Street
London, ENGLAND
(01) 734-0592

Sidney Monas
University of Texas
Slavic Department
Austin, TX 78703
(512) 471-3607



The Center for Strategic and International Studies

Georgetown University / 1800 K Street Northwest / Washington DC 20006 / Telephone 202 / 887-0200

Cable Address: CENSTRAT

TWX: 7108229583

EASTERN EUROPE

Andrzej Korbonski, CHAIRMAN
University of California-Los Angeles
Dept of Political Science
Los Angeles, CA 90024
(213) 825-3784 direct
(213) 825-4331

Charles Gati
Union College
Dept. of Political Science
Social Sciences Building
Schenectady, NY 12308
(212) 280-4681

Sarah Terry
Tufts University
Dept. of Political Science
Medford, MA 02155
(617) 628-5000 ext 275

Jiri Valenta
Council on Foreign Relations
The Harold Pratt House
58 East 68th Street
New York, NY 10021
(212) 734-0400

STAT



The Center for Strategic and International Studies

Georgetown University / 1800 K Street Northwest / Washington DC 20006 / Telephone 202/887-0200

Cable Address: CENSTRAT

TWX: 7108229583

OUTSIDE WORLD

Adam Ulam, CHAIRMAN
Harvard University
Russian Research Center
Archibald Cary Coolidge Hall
1737 Cambridge Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
(617) 495-4037
(617) 495-4035

David Albright
National Security Affairs Dept.
Air War College
Maxwell Air Force Base, AL 36112
(205) 293-2386

Raymond Baker
Williams College
Dept. of Political Science
Williamstown, MA 02167
(413) 597-2162

Gerrit Gong
CSIS
1800 K Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
(202) 775-3255

Abraham Lowenthal
Wilson Center
Latin American Program
Smithsonian Institution Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20560
(202) 357-1446

Angela Stent
CSIS
1800 K Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
(202) 887-0200

Rebecca Strode
National Institute for
Public Policy Suite 301
6870 Elm Street
McLean, VA 22101
(703) 442-4820

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